

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF AGNES  
FLOOD COMMEMORATED**HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, June 21, 2002*

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call the attention of the House of Representatives to the 30th anniversary of Hurricane Agnes. I would also like to bring attention to the approaching completion of the landmark Wyoming Valley Levee Raising Project in my district to provide protection to the people of the valley in the event of another flood of that magnitude.

On June 23, 1972, sirens sounded across much of my district in Pennsylvania, warning that the valiant effort to contain the surging Susquehanna River had been lost.

Agnes poured 14 trillion gallons of water onto Northeastern Pennsylvania, causing the Susquehanna River to break from its boundaries and spread a layer of flood water 40 feet deep and 2 miles wide across a densely populated region in the Wyoming Valley. The damage caused by the unyielding rush of water was immense. Twenty-six thousand homes and more than 3,000 small businesses and factories were heavily damaged by flood waters and 3,500 families lost their homes completely. In all, 72,000 people were forced from their homes. Nearly 15,000 Wyoming Valley families lived in trailers provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, many of them for the better part of a year.

Luzerne County, located in the heart of northeastern Pennsylvania, suffered 69 percent of the total damage that Agnes caused in Pennsylvania. Property damage amounted to \$1.3 billion, or more than \$4 billion in today's dollars, and another \$300 million in road and bridge damage was incurred. Communities were faced with the prospect of rebuilding entire commercial and residential areas.

In the wake of this disaster, one of the worst natural disasters in the Nation's history, a determined populace emerged. Residents of this region found courage among the ruins and forged ahead with an undying spirit to rebuild their communities. Agnes may have laid waste to their homes and businesses, but it could not extinguish their desire to live and raise their families in the "Valley with a Heart."

The Red Cross and Salvation Army played a crucial role in providing emergency shelter and meals, not just in the first hours of the crisis but for weeks and months afterward. For example, that summer, the Red Cross spent \$13 million locally on food, supplies and personnel, and the Salvation Army provided more than 4 million meals.

Meeting the challenge of recovery were several citizen action groups such as the Flood Victims Action Council under the leadership of Min Matheson, and the Flood Recovery Task Force, which was chaired by Judge Max Rosenn. These groups were instrumental in the economic and social resurgence of the areas most damaged by the Agnes flood.

I had the honor of contributing to this effort as the volunteer legal counsel to the Flood Victims Action Council over a period of almost two years. While the hard work and determination of local community groups and area citizens played a role in this historic rebuilding

of northeastern Pennsylvania, the recovery assistance provided by the Federal Government was truly phenomenal.

Through the cooperative efforts of Congressman Dan Flood, State Senator Frank O'Connell, Bill Wilcox, Secretary of the state Department of Community Affairs working on behalf of Governor Shapp, and Frank Carlucci acting on behalf of President Nixon, the Government rushed approximately \$1 billion in aid to the communities of the Wyoming Valley. When critics disparage the ability of government to do things for citizens, I recall that moment when the Federal Government made an enormous difference for the better for the people of Pennsylvania, and look forward to the completion of the landmark project that will protect the people of the Wyoming Valley in the event of another Agnes-level flood.

In 2002, the people of the valley have something they did not have 30 years ago—the nearly complete \$175 million Wyoming Valley Levee Raising Project that includes more than 50 communities and 5 counties along a 60-mile stretch of the river. The structural components of the levee system are scheduled to be completed by the end of this year.

In 1972, the existing levees were overtopped by several feet during the Agnes flood. In 1986, during my first term, Congress authorized the Wyoming Valley Levee Raising Project to modify the existing flood control projects to protect against a new flood of the same magnitude. We had a disturbing reminder of the need for the levee raising project during the January 1996 flood. At that time, the rapidly rising Susquehanna River prompted officials to order the evacuation of approximately 100,000 people living in the City of Wilkes-Barre and its neighboring communities in the Wyoming Valley. While the river peaked at nearly 13 feet above flood stage, it remained within the banks of the levees and caused relatively minor damage.

From my first term in Congress, I have made it one of my top priorities to provide Agnes-level flood protection to the Wyoming Valley, and it is heartening to see that day approaching.

Completion of the levee raising project will be a major step forward in transforming the Susquehanna River from a liability into an asset. One of the steps forward that we have already taken is the 1997 designation of the Upper Susquehanna-Lackawanna watershed as one of just 14 American Heritage Rivers in the nation.

In the years ahead, I hope that we will continue our progress toward a cleaner Susquehanna that will provide recreation and an enhanced quality of life, not only for present-day residents but also for our children and grandchildren.

IN HONOR OF THE COLOMBIAN  
RALLY IN SUPPORT OF TEM-  
PORARY PROTECTIVE AND STA-  
TUS

**HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, June 21, 2002*

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the historic sacrifices and the noble

struggle for peace that the people of Colombia are engaged in today. I rise in strong support of Temporary Protective Status (TPS) for the Colombians who reside in the United States and in the 13th Congressional District.

The Colombians who reside here have made, and continue to make, enormous sacrifices for the safety and well-being of their families. I know this because I know them. We look forward to the day, when their beautiful country, our historic friend and neighbor, Colombia, once again stands as the proud nation we know it to be—a peaceful nation, a nation free of conflict, free of the scourge of narcotics, and free to live in peace.

We admire the great spirit of the Colombian people. They are very generous and hospitable people, they are a gifted people with a great culture, and they are among the very best friends of the United States in this Hemisphere.

On the occasion of the Colombian rally in support of TPS on June 21, 2002 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, I want to say to directly to my Colombian friends: "Mis queridos amigos Colombianos: Conocemos bien su situación. La persecución, la violencia, los secuestros, el desplazamiento. Ayer, estuvo su presidente-electo, Alvaro Uribe Velez visitando el Congreso. Juntos con él, apoyamos al TPS para Colombia. Que viva Colombia. Que viva los Estados Unidos. Y que viva la amistad de nuestros pueblos."

The crisis of violence and economic strife in Colombia has caused tens of thousands of Colombians to flee their homes and seek out a safe haven elsewhere, including in the United States. Most are not so lucky. There are more than one million displaced Colombians inside of Colombia alone. As long as danger and conflict persists in Colombia, Temporary Protective Status would provide Colombians who are here a safe refuge in America.

I want also to congratulate the Colombian people for the free and fair election of President-Elect Alvaro Uribe Velez, and Vice President-Elect, Francisco Santos Calderon. I, along with all Colombians in the United States, expect and hope that President-Elect Uribe will request Temporary Protective Status for Colombians in the US. I have faith that the situation in Colombia will change for the better. In the meantime, let TPS become a reality for Colombians, let us extend to Colombians the American hand of friendship and of humanity so that they may live without fear for their lives and those of their loved ones.

Today, I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the need for TPS for Colombians. Let us grant Temporary Protective Service to those in need, and let those fleeing Colombians have refuge in the United States.

CONGRESSIONAL WEB ACCESSI-  
BILITY DAY: CELEBRATING THE  
ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF  
SECTION 508

**HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN**

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, June 21, 2002*

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the one-year anniversary of Section 508.